



Common Core State Standards Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

This Common Core State Standards Initiative is a significant and historic opportunity for states to collectively accelerate and drive education reform toward the ultimate goal of all children graduating from high school ready for college, work, and success in the global economy. The initiative will build off of the research and good work states have already done to build and implement high-quality standards. The standards will be research- and evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and be internationally benchmarked.

Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?

Today we live in a world without borders. To maintain America's competitive edge, we need all of our students to be well prepared and ready to compete with not only their American peers, but with students from around the world. These common standards will be a critical first step to bring about real and meaningful transformation of our education system to benefit all students.

States know that standards alone cannot propel the systems change we need. The common core state standards will enable participating states to:

- Articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for students;
- Align textbooks, digital media, and curricula to the internationally benchmarked standards;
- Ensure professional development for educators is based on identified need and best practices;
- Develop and implement an assessment system to measure student performance against the common core state standards; and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the common core state college and career readiness standards.

Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) have initiated a state-led process of developing and adopting a common core of state standards.

As part of this process, they have convened a National Policy Forum composed of signatory national organizations (e.g., National School Boards Association, Council of Great City Schools, and many others) to share ideas, gather input, and inform the common core state standards initiative.

How will states adopt the common core state standards?

States will adopt the common core state standards through a process that respects unique state contexts. CCSSO and the NGA Center will ask states to share their adoption timeline and process in early 2010, when the K-12 common core state standards are completed. A validation committee will verify that states have accurately adopted the common core state standards.

Process

What will make this process different from other efforts to create common standards?

Both the timing of this initiative as well as the process gives it a high probability for success. There is a growing belief among state leaders, education leaders, and business leaders that differences in state standards, in an era of increasing student mobility and global competition, no longer make sense.

This process is different since it is a state-led, versus a federal, effort and has the support of several major national organizations, including CCSSO, the NGA Center, National Association of State Boards of Education, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Parent Teacher Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the Hunt Institute, and the Business Roundtable,, and involves participation of leading standards developers from Achieve, ACT, and the College Board.

States have been the leaders of standards-based reform efforts. The proposed adoption process respects and takes into consideration unique state contexts and encourages states to adopt the common core state standards.

Are these national standards?

No. This initiative is driven by collective state action and states will voluntarily adopt the standards based on the timelines and context in their state.

Who or what entity determines the common core state standards?

CCSSO and NGA Center are responsible for the development and cross-state adoption process.

- A Standards Development Work Group is responsible for determining and writing the common core state standards. [Click here to view the list](#) of work and feedback group members.
- A Feedback Group provides information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.
- A Validation Committee – nominated by states and national organizations and selected by a group of 12 governors and chiefs who hold leadership positions at NGA Center and CCSSO. These independent, national education experts will review the common core state standards to ensure they meet the development criteria.

By what criteria will the standards be judged? Who or what entity sets such criteria?

The standards will be judged based on research and evidence to ensure that they meet the following criteria:

- Aligned with college and work expectations
- Inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Internationally benchmarked

Criteria have been set by states, through their national organizations CCSSO and the NGA Center.

What grades will be covered in the common core state standards?

The English-language arts and math standards will be K-12 standards. This will not cover pre-k, but the common core state standards will be informed by research from the early childhood community.

How are teachers involved in the common standards initiative?

NGA and CCSSO have asked for and received feedback from national organizations representing educators, such as the National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council

of Teachers of English (NCTE). These organizations each brought together groups of teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards. The feedback was used to inform the public draft of the college- and career-readiness standards. Numerous teacher organizations are also involved with the initiative through the National Policy Forum, which provides a means to share ideas, gather input, and inform the common core state standards initiative.

Individual teachers and practitioners can also submit comments and feedback on the standards through the web site www.corestandards.org.

What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?

In the development of these standards, the inclusion of all types of learners was a priority. Chosen language was intended to be open and accessible to different learners.

How will we be sure that the standards are based on evidence and not on individual beliefs about what are important?

The validation group of independent, national experts will review the process and substance of the common core state standards delineated by the standards development group to ensure they are research and evidence based.

Why are the common core state standards just in English-language arts and math? Are there plans to develop common standards in other areas in the future? Will this work just narrow the curriculum in schools?

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards since states have the longest history of standards in these areas, they are the core of our current national accountability system, and they provide the greatest areas of leverage. Other content areas and domains are crucial to children's education and their success in college and careers. Once the English language arts and math standards are developed, states plan to develop a common core of standards in science and potentially additional subject areas. The emphasis now is on the English-language arts and math standards because these two subjects are foundational skills.

The common state standards should not narrow the curriculum since the standards will be fewer than current standards, allowing teachers to create deep, multi-disciplinary projects and lessons that help their students reach the standards.

Will these standards incorporate both content and skills?

Both content and skills are important and will be incorporated in the common core state standards. One of the criteria by which the standards will be determined is whether or not they are inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills.

Implementation and Future Work

What will these common core state standards mean for students?

This initiative will potentially affect 45.1 million students which is about 91 percent of the student population (SchoolDataDirect.org, 2007). Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students in each state are learning to different levels. This initiative will allow students equal access to an excellent education regardless of where they live. This next generation of students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers

How will these standards impact teachers?

The common core state standards will allow for more focused pre-service and professional development; provide the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments at classroom and state levels that are truly linked to curriculum and student achievement; inform the development of a curriculum that promotes deep understanding for all

children; and because the standards are fewer, teachers will be able to use their professional expertise in utilizing multiple strategies to best support learning for all students.

It is also clear that educators will require additional supports and resources to help students meet these fewer, clearer, and higher expectations.

Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?

Yes. There will be an ongoing state-led development process that can support continuous improvement of this first version of the common core state standards based on research and evidence-based learning.

Will common assessments be developed? Will one national test be created that looks like the current tests we have today?

States know that standards alone cannot propel the systems change we need. Assessments aligned with the common core state standards will play an important role in making sure the standards are embedded in our education system.

Some states will voluntarily come together to develop new innovative, common assessments as part of the Race to the Top program. However, states do not want to see one national assessment given once a year that relies on multiple-choice items. A common assessment *system* will include multiple forms of assessment so that what a student knows and can do, not the form of the assessment, determines performance. An assessment system must provide assessment *for* learning as well as assessment *of* learning.

Instructional materials and curricula are key components to making standards usable and real in the classroom. Will you be creating common instructional materials and curricula?

The standards must be aligned to assessments and classroom practice to be effective. CCSSO and the NGA Center are focusing now on developing high-quality standards for states to adopt. NGA and CCSSO understand the importance of instructional materials in order to ensure the teachers have tools to successfully implement these standards.

What is the role of the federal government in this initiative?

The federal government can:

- Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to effectively implement the standards as through the Race to the Top Fund authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.
- Provide additional long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development supports, and a research agenda that can help continually improve the common core state standards over time.
- Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from states' international benchmarking efforts and from federal research.

What is the timeline for the common core state standards initiative?

Key dates in the project are identified below.

- November 2009 – College- and career-readiness standards validated.
- Winter 2009/2010 – K-12 common core state standards in English-language arts and mathematics completed and publicly released.
- Early 2010, states submit timeline and process for adoption of common core state standards in English-language arts and mathematics.